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## The Sweet Truth About Sugar

### Surprising Facts:

Did you know that on average, Americans currently consume 30 teaspoons of sugar per day!? Sugars found in foods can be naturally occurring or added during processing. Naturally occurring sugars are found in foods like whole fruits and fluid milk. Added sugars are found in obvious sources like soft drinks, candies, and cakes. More and more often you can also find sugar in unlikely foods such as salad dressings and even whole wheat bread! It is important to remember that sugars provide calories but no nutrients thus adding many “empty” calories to your diet. (AHA, 2012)

### Current Recommendations:

The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends that women consume no more than an average of 6 teaspoons or 100 calories of sugar per day, and that men consume about 9 teaspoons or 150 calories per day. This is far less than the 30 teaspoons most Americans consume on average. In order to convert grams of sugar listed on the nutrition label into number of teaspoons, divide the number of grams on the label by 4. For example, if your morning yogurt contains 24 grams of sugar (listed on the nutrition label), divide that number by 4 to get 6 teaspoons of sugar. (AHA, 2012)

### Possible Health Concerns

By limiting the amount of sugar you consume you can prevent a number of common health problems. The most common problem linked to sugar overconsumption is cavities. People also can develop problems with their pancreas, which is a gland found behind the stomach. The pancreas produces a hormone called insulin which helps to regulate the amount of sugar in the blood. If a person eats too much sugar day after day, the pancreas becomes tired and will not be able to process all of the sugar in your bloodstream. When this happens, the person is diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes. Overconsumption of sugar is also linked to obesity. In order to prevent these health problems, it may be beneficial to follow the AHA recommendations.



### Ways to Identify Hidden Sugars

Checking food labels on packages is the best way to identify hidden sugars. First look at the nutrition label. The label will have the total sugars listed in grams. Next, scan the ingredient list for any words ended in “-ose.” The most common forms of sugar are sucrose, glucose, dextrose and maltose. Other names that may also be used instead of sugar on food labels are high fructose corn syrup, corn syrup, corn sweetener, honey, molasses, barley malt syrup, or brown rice syrup. (AHA, 2012)

### Ways to Limit Sugar Intake

- Drink water, unsweetened tea, or unflavored fluid milk in place of soft drinks, juice drinks or other sweet beverages.
- Rather than reaching for a candy bar to curb your sweet tooth, make your own snack mix from whole grain dry cereals, unsweetened dried fruits, and unsalted nuts.
- Substitute unsweetened applesauce for sugar in recipes or just reduce the amount of sugar you add. Often times you can reduce the sugar added to recipes by at least 1/4 cup without noticing the difference.
- Buy fruits either fresh, frozen or canned but look for unsweetened varieties such as fruit canned in natural juices rather than syrup.

## Additional Resources

- ◆ [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)
- ◆ [www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov)